

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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FM AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
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INFO AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
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AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMCONSUL CURACAO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CVIS, SPOP, SREF, FW
SUBJ: THE SQUEEZE ON HAITIANS IN THE FRENCH WEST INDIES

REF; MARTINIQUE 0170

1. FRENCH OFFICIALS IN ST. MARTIN, FRENCH WEST INDIES INTEND TO INSTITUTE STRICTER IMMIGRATION CONTROLS TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL ALIENS--OVERWHELMINGLY HAITIANS--WORKING THERE. ACCORDING TO ST. MARTIN MAYOR ELIE FLEMING, "FEW" OF THE ESTIMATED 3000 HAITIANS IN ST. MARTIN (FRENCH POPULATION 7,000) HAVE RESIDENCE PERMITS, THOUGH MOST STAY LONGER THAN THE NINETY DAYS PERMITTED WITHOUT REQUIRING A RESIDENCE PERMIT, AND VIRTUALLY ALL WORK. FLEMING SAID HE INTENDED TO FORCE THEIR DEPARTURE GRADUALLY AND KEEP THE NUMBER OF RESIDENCE PERMITS ACCORDED TO HAITIANS COMMENSURATE WITH LABOR REQUIREMENTS, WHICH WILL BE MEASURED AGAINST THE UNEMPLOYMENT LEVEL OF ST. MARTINOIS.

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2. FLEMING SAID THAT AN ARRANGEMENT HAD BEEN MADE WITH DUTCH OFFICIALS TO STATION FRENCH OFFICERS AT JULIANA AIRPORT, LOCATED ON THE DUTCH SIDE OF THE ISLAND. FORMERLY, THE FRENCH HAD NO CONTROL OVER ALIENS ENTERING THROUGH JULIANA, EVEN IF THEY WERE BOUND FOR THE FRENCH SIDE, AND DUTCH OFFICIALS WERE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT ILLEGAL ALIENS.

HOWEVER, LABOR PROBLEMS AT THE HOTELS ON THE DUTCH SIDE HAVE MADE THOSE OFFICIALS MORE SENSITIVE TO THE PROBLEM, AND THEY ARE NOW REPORTEDLY ANXIOUS TO PUT A LID ON IT.

3. FLEMING ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO INCREASE THE LOCAL POLICE FORCE FROM THE PRESENT LEVEL OF FOUR TO EIGHTEEN IN ORDER TO CONTROL ILLEGAL ALIENS. ST. MARTIN HAS TRADITIONALLY RELIED ON FRENCH GENDARMES FOR THAT JOB, BUT THE GENDARMES ARE UNABLE TO DISTINGUISH ON SIGHT BETWEEN ST. MARTINOIS AND ALIENS FROM OTHER ISLANDS. FLEMING SAYS THAT LOCAL POLICEMENT WILL BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY ALIENS QUICKLY AND DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE "LEGAL" AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT.

4. FLEMING VOICED CONCERN OVER WHAT HE PERCEIVED AS AN INCREASE IN HAITIANS TRYING TO ENTER ST. MARTIN, WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO A RECENT EXPULSION OF HAITIANS FROM JAMAICA. CONOFF INTERVIEWED 120 HAITIAN VISA APPLICANTS DURING AUGUST TRIP TO ST. MARTIN AND COULD HAVE INTERVIEWED MANY MORE IF TIME HAD ALLOWED. IN GUADELOUPE, WHERE HAITIAN VISA APPLICANTS HAVE AVERAGED TWENTY-FIVE IN RECENT CONSULAR TRIPS, CONOFF INTERVIEWED EIGHTY-FIVE DURING AUGUST TRIP.

5. THE MOVE TOWARD STRICTER ENFORCEMENT OF IMMIGRATION LAWS FOLLOWS MEASURES TAKEN EARLIER BY THE PREFET OF GUADELOUPE TO TIGHTEN IMMIGRATION CONTROLS. (SEE REFTTEL) AT THAT TIME, THE BOND FOR HAITIANS AND DOMINICANS ENTERING GUADELOUPE WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RAISED FROM 1500 TO 2500 FRANCS (APPROX 585 DOLLARS) AND THEY WERE ALSO REQUIRED TO HAVE AN ONWARD TICKET. THOSE REGULATIONS APPLY TO ST. MARTIN AS WELL, SINCE IT IS AN ADMINISTRATIVE PART OF GUADELOUPE.

COMMENT: IT IS A RARE WELL-TO-DO ST. MARTINOIS (OR FOREIGN HOME-OWNER IN ST. MARTIN) WHO DOES NOT HAVE AT LEAST ONE HAITIAN OR DOMINICAN DOMESTIC EMPLOYEE. SINCE FLEMING HAS ON PAST OCCASIONS ADVOCATED A RELAXED POLICY TOWARD OTHER ISLANDERS AND SINCE HE HAS ADMITTEDLY HIRED ALIENS HIMSELF, POST BELIEVES FLEMING IS UNDER PRESSURE FROM PREFECTURE TO CRACK DOWN ON ALIEN WORKERS AND THAT AT LEAST PART OF THE PRESSURE STEMS FROM THE GROWING NUMBER OF AMERICAN HOMEOWNERS IN ST. MARTIN WHO HIRE ALIENS AS DOMESTICS. THE PREFECTURE HAS JURISDICTION IN IMMIGRATION MATTERS BUT MUST RELY IN PART ON THE MAYOR'S FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS. ROBINSON

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